

# pollinator garden calendar

## Spring

### EMERGE

Wait until mid-April to tidy up the garden so as to not disturb overwintering insects. Many pollinators awaken from hibernation in spring from dead wood, hollow stems, unmown grass or bare ground, depending on the species. They look for mates and forage on spring flowers.

Save trees from herbicide damage by not spraying for weeds as woodies leaf out.

Push mulch away from plant crowns. Keep it less than 2" deep for better plant vigor.

Cut back last year's stems for a tidy look, but leave 12-16" for hibernating pollinators.

Cut or pull tall, unsightly weeds as they bloom to control their populations.

Make room for a wild corner as pollinators mate, nest and forage.



Emerging mason bee.



Mating eastern tailed blues.



Tachnid fly eggs on a caterpillar.

## Summer

### NEST

Leave a wild spot to host nesting insects. By mid-summer, many pollinators lay eggs on plant leaves or in dead wood, hollow stems, unmown grass or in the ground, depending on the species. Adults and newly-hatched larvae forage on nectar and pollen from summer flowers.

Reserve some bare dirt in a sunny spot for ground-nesting bees.

Try to water only in drought, but it's good to have a wet spot for butterflies.

Keep the yard safe from pesticides like bug killer sprays and tree injections.

## autumn

### FORAGE

Grow plants like aster, sedum and goldenrod to provide forage when it might otherwise be scarce. Most pollinator larvae and adults are active during autumn and spend their time foraging on late-blooming flowers. Some species have morphed into adults by this time.

Wait until late spring for yard clean-up as pollinators look for safe spots to overwinter.

Time to get rid of persistent weeds while they're green and native plants are dormant.

Mulch with leaves or lawn clippings to keep weeds down until the garden matures.



Ground bee nests in a lawn.



Hawk moth caterpillar larva.



Soldier beetle feeding on pollen.



Foraging paper wasp.



Pearl crescent pupa in a chrysalis.



Bumblebee queen burrow.

## Winter

### OVERWINTER

Try to leave the garden undisturbed until spring so pollinators have safe places to hibernate. Most spend the winter in an inactive state, often tucked away in hidden wild spots like tall grass, shrubs, trees or fence posts, or in piles of leaves or sticks, dead wood or in the ground.

Have some fun making a bee hotel or a scrapbook of pollinator photos from the yard.



POLLINATOR  
HABITAT

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# Nebraska plants for pollinators

## spring

### TOP GARDEN PICKS



**Dwarf Spiderwort**  
*Tradescantia tharpii*



**Large Beardtongue**  
*Penstemon grandiflorus*



**Golden Alexanders**  
*Zizia aurea*



**Prairie Smoke**  
*Geum triflorum*



**Blue Phlox**  
*Phlox divaricata*



**Cream Wild Indigo**  
*Baptisia bracteata*

### TREES AND SHRUBS



**Serviceberry**  
*Amelanchier spp.*



**American Plum**  
*Prunus americana*

## summer

### TOP GARDEN PICKS



**Leadplant**  
*Amorpha canescens*



**Butterfly Milkweed**  
*Asclepias tuberosa*



**Beebalm**  
*Monarda fistulosa*



**Narrowleaf Coneflower**  
*Echinacea angustifolia*



**Dotted Blazing Star**  
*Liatris punctata*



**New Jersey Tea**  
*Ceanothus americanus*



**American Linden**  
*Tilia americana*



**Buttonbush**  
*Cephaelanthus occidentalis*

## autumn

### TOP GARDEN PICKS



**Stonecrop**  
*Sedum spp.*



**Aromatic Aster**  
*Aster oblongifolius*



**Wichita Mtns. Goldenrod**  
*Solidago 'Wichita Mtns.'*



**Hoary Vervain**  
*Verbena stricta*



**Blue Pitcher Sage**  
*Salvia azurea*



**Wild Senna**  
*Senna hebecarpa*

### TREES AND SHRUBS



**Witchhazel**  
*Hamamelis virginiana*

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[plantnebraska.org](http://plantnebraska.org)



## pesticides & pollinators

We can do a lot to support pollinators by minimizing pesticide use around our yards. Pesticides like bug and weed killers can have a disastrous effect on pollinator populations. Most bug killers (called insecticides) are poisonous to pollinators and kill them directly, sometimes years after application. Weed killers (called herbicides) cause indirect harm by eliminating flowering plants critical to their food supply. Instead of using pesticides, try these alternatives.

### KEEP YOUR PLANTS HEALTHY

A healthy plant can fend off pests and diseases by itself. This means picking the right plant for the right place. If a plant is struggling, make sure the mulch around it isn't too deep.

### STRIVE FOR BIODIVERSITY

A landscape with many different kinds of plants can encourage native predators of garden pests, which in turn reduce pest populations. Try to grow at least a few different bloomers for each season.

### TRY SOFTER METHODS

Handpicking larger pests and spraying soapy water on smaller ones are some chemical-free options. You can manage aggressive or unsightly weeds by cutting them back as they bloom.



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**PLANT BIODIVERSITY!** Growing many kinds of flowers is one way to support beneficial insects that pollinate our crops, gardens and wild places. Here are examples of common Nebraska pollinators (butterflies, bees, beetles, moths, wasps and flies) and the native blooms they depend on for pollen and nectar through the seasons.

## spring

### Large Beardtongue & Eastern Carpenter Bee

*Penstemon grandiflorus* & *Xylocopa virginica*



A shiny, mostly black body distinguishes this bee from its cousin, the bumble bee.

### Eastern Columbine & Dark Sweat Bees

*Aquilegia canadensis* & *Lasioglossum* sp.



This type of tiny sweat bee is able to collect pollen from these trumpet-like flowers.

### Wild Cherries, Plums & Ichneumonids

*Prunus* sp. & *Lissonota* sp.



This beneficial wasp, which generally can't sting, visits *Prunus* flowers for nectar.

### Currants, Gooseberries & Bumble Bees

*Ribes* sp. & *Bombus* sp.



The nectar and pollen of *Ribes* flowers attract emerging bumble bee queens.

## summer

### Leadplant & Small Carpenter Bees

*Amorpha canescens* & *Ceratina* sp.



Ceratina visit *Amorpha* for pollen as well as nectar, gleaning both protein and carbohydrates.

### New Jersey Tea & Syrphid Fly

*Ceanothus americanus* & *Allograpta obliqua*



The second most effective pollinators on the prairie are flies, like this syrphid fly.

### Bergamot Beebalm & Bee Fly

*Monarda fistulosa* & *Systoechus vulgaris*



Bee flies collect nectar from *Monarda* with their proboscis while hovering over the flower.

### Buttonbush & Sunflower Bee

*Cephalanthus occidentalis* & *Svastra obliqua*



Although known for visiting sunflowers, this bee visits buttonbush for nectar.

## autumn

### Aromatic Aster & Blue-Green Sweat Bees

*Sympphyotrichum oblongifolium* & *Augochlorella* sp.



Asters provide valuable, late-season nectar for sweat bees.

### Wichita Mountains Goldenrod & Soldier Beetle

*Solidago 'Wichita Mountains'* & *Podabrus flavigollis*



Beetles like this one are important pollinators, and are commonly found on goldenrod.

### Dotted Blazing Star & Monarch Butterfly

*Liatris punctata* & *Danaus plexippus*



Monarchs only feed on nectar, but from a variety of sources including *Liatris*.

### Blue Pitcher Sage & Silver Spotted Skipper

*Salvia azurea* & *Epargyreus clarus*



A long proboscis allows silver spotted skippers to visit this *Salvia* for nectar.

## DON'T FORGET LARVAL HOSTS

Many insects (especially butterflies) lay their eggs on only certain plants. When they hatch, the larvae eat on the plant's leaves for food before morphing into adults.

### Golden Alexanders & Black Swallowtail

*Zizia aurea* & *Papilio polyxenes*



### Cream Wild Indigo & Orange Sulphur

*Baptisia bracteata* & *Colias eurytheme*



### Butterfly Milkweed & Small Milkweed Bug

*Asclepias tuberosa* & *Lygaeus kalmii*



### Willows & Mourning Cloak

*Salix* sp. & *Nymphalis antiopa*

